

FALL SEMESTER—A TIME FOR PARENTS TO DISCUSS THE RISKS OF COLLEGE DRINKING

As college students arrive on campus this fall, it's a time of new experiences, new friendships, and making memories that will last a lifetime. Unfortunately for many, it is also a time of excessive drinking and dealing with its aftermath—vandalism, violence, sexual aggression, and even death.

According to the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 59.8 percent of full-time college students ages 18 to 22 drank alcohol in the past month; 37.9 percent engaged in binge drinking (5 or more drinks on an occasion); and 12.2 percent engaged in heavy drinking (5 or more drinks on an occasion on 5 or more occasions per month). These rates are higher than those for their non-college attending peers.

The consequences of excessive drinking by college students are more significant, more destructive, and more costly than many parents realize. And these consequences affect students whether or not they drink. Statistics from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) indicate that drinking by college students ages 18 to 24 contributes to an estimated 1,825 student deaths, 696,000 assaults by another student who has been drinking, and 97,000 cases of sexual assault or date rape each year.

HIGH-RISK DRINKING AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS



¹ Hingson, R.W.; Zha, W.; and Weitzman, E.R. "Magnitude of and trends in alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among U.S. college students ages 18–24." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* (Suppl. 16):12–20, 2009. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2701090>. Accessed December 14, 2015.

² Hingson, R.; Heeren, T.; Winter, M.; et al. "Magnitude of alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among college students ages 18–24: Changes from 1998 to 2001." *Annual Review of Public Health* 26:259–279, 2005. Available at: http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/media/mag_and_prev_arph_april_2005.pdf. Accessed December 14, 2015.

³ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2014 *National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. Table 6.89B—Binge Alcohol Use in the Past Month among Persons Aged 18 to 22, by College Enrollment Status and Demographic Characteristics: Percentages, 2013 and 2014. Available at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DetTabs2014/NSDUH-DetTabs2014.htm#tab6-89b>. Accessed December 14, 2015.

Early Weeks Are Critical

As the fall semester begins, parents can use this time to help prepare their college-age sons and daughters by talking with them about the consequences of excessive drinking.

Some first-year students who live on campus may be at particular risk. Overall, heavy drinking rates of college students surpass those of their non-college peers. In addition, on arriving at school, many students significantly increase their heavy drinking over a relatively short period of time, which can contribute to difficulties with alcohol and the college transition in general.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the first 6 weeks of the first semester are critical to academic success. Because many students initiate heavy drinking during this time, the potential exists for excessive alcohol consumption to interfere with successful adaptation to campus life. The transition to college is often difficult and about one-third of first-year students fail to enroll for their second year.

Parents Can Help

During these crucial early weeks, parents can do a number of things to stay involved. They can inquire about campus alcohol policies, keep in touch with their sons and daughters, and ask about roommates and living arrangements.

They should also discuss the penalties for underage drinking, and how alcohol use can lead to date rape, violence, and academic failure.

Resources Are Available

For parents who want to discuss the consequences of college drinking with their sons and daughters, a variety of helpful resources are available from NIAAA at www.CollegeDrinkingPrevention.gov.

These resources include a parents' guide that offers research-based information plus helpful advice on choosing the right college, staying involved during the freshman year, and getting assistance if faced with an alcohol-related crisis.

The website also provides links to alcohol policies at colleges across the country, an interactive diagram of how alcohol affects the human body, and an interactive alcohol cost calculator.

Copies of all materials from the NIAAA Task Force on College Drinking, including the parents' guide, may be downloaded from www.CollegeDrinkingPrevention.gov, or ordered through the NIAAA Publications Distribution Center, P.O. Box 10686, Rockville, MD 20849-0686.

For more information, visit: www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov.



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